

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 TRSE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 COME-00 AGRE-00 /065 W
-----240047Z 107084 /60

R 231346Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY WARSAW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5722
INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMCONSUL KRAKOW
AMCONSUL POZNAN

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E.O. 11652: N/
TAGS: EGEN, PL
SUBJECT: A MERRY CHRISTMAS IN POLAND

REF: WARSAW 8832

1. SUMMARY. OVER THE LAST WEEK EMBASSY AND CONSULATE OFFICERS HAVE OBSERVED THE AVAILABILITY OF MEAT, FISH, AND OTHER FOOD PRODUCTS IN MOST OF THE MAJOR CITIES OF POLAND. THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN PUTTING ABOVE-NORMAL SUPPLIES OF MEAT ON THE MARKET, BUT SHORTAGES OF SOME TRADITIONAL ITEMS, SUCH AS HAM AND FISH, EXISTED IN SOME AREAS AS LATE AS DECEMBER 21. LONG LINES HAVE BEEN OBSERVED IN FRONT OF MEAT STORES, QUEUES OF THE SORT GENERATED HERE WHEN THE PUBLIC BELIEVES THAT LONG-AWAITED GOODS CAN AT LAST BE FOUND BUT MAY NOT BE AROUND FOR LONG. LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS, AND THE SYSTEM OF DISTRIBUTION (IN WHICH TIME, NOT INCOME, ALLOCATES) MEAN THERE WILL BE SOME UNSATISFIED DEMAND FOR CHRISTMAS FEASTS, BUT MUCH MORE FOOD IS AVAILABLE THAN TWO MONTHS AGO.
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END SUMMARY

2. AS REPORTED IN REF, MEAT, VEGETABLES, AND FRESH FRUIT SUPPLIES INCREASED CONSIDERABLY IN WARSAW OVER THE LAST THREE WEEKS. THIS TREND HAS ACCELERATED, WITH PROK AND HAM, TURKEYS, GEESE, DUCK, WILD GAME, AND FRESH AND FROZEN VEGE-

TABLES AVAILABLE. A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF THE POULTRY BEING SOLD CARRIES GERMAN-LANGUAGE LABELS, SUGGESTING IT HAS BEEN DIVERTED FROM THE EXPORT MARKET. DAIRY PRODUCTS ARE ALSO IN GOOD SUPPLY IN WARSAW. SAUSAGE ABOUNDS, REFLECTING TO SOME EXTENT THE TRADITIONAL HOLIDAY DEMAND FOR THE BETTER CUTS OF MEAT. LINES OF AS MANY AS 300 PEOPLE HAVE BEEN SEEN AT SOME MEAT STORES, AND THE ABSENCE OF ANY QUEUE USUALLY MEANS THERE IS NO QUALITY MEAT. SOME OF THE PRODUCE NOW AVAILABLE HAS NOT BEEN ON THE MARKET FOR MONTHS, AND THE WARSAW CITIZEN IS WILLING TO SUFFER IN LINE EARLY THIS WEEK RATHER THAN BET THE SUPPLY WILL LAST ENOUGH THURSDAY.

3. CONSULATE OFFICERS HAVE OBSERVED SIMILAR SUPPLY CONDITIONS IN KRAKOW, KATOWICE, POZNAN, AND WROCLAW. SOME ITEMS, NOTABLY HAM AND PORK IN POZNAN AND FISH (CARP IS PART OF THE TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS MEAL) IN KRAKOW AND KATOWICE, ARE STILL SCARCE. CITRUS FRUITS AND PACKAGED FOODS, MANY WITH GERMAN LABELS, HAVE BEEN IN GOOD SUPPLY IN THE POZNAN DISTRICT.

4. AN EMBASSY OFFICER WHO VISITED BIALYSTOCK FOUND ALSO AMPLE SUPPLIES OF CONSUMER GOODS, PARTICULARLY LARGE ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES AND CLOTHING . CARP WAS NOT AVAILABLE ON DECEMBER 20 IN BIALYSTOCK, BUT HAM WAS BEING SOLD. THERE WERE LINES AT MEAT STORES, BUT THEY WERE MUCH SHORTER THAN THOSE IN WARSAW.

5. AN AMERICAN CITIZEN RESIDING IN GDANSK SAID THAT MEAT LINES WERE STILL PREVALENT THERE, BUT THAT TURKEY, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GEESE, AND OTHER ITEMS HAD APPEARED ON THE MARKET FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MONTHS. FRESH FRUIT HAS BEEN AVAILABLE IN GDANSK AND GDYNIA FOR SEVERAL WEEKS, HE SAID.

6. AN EMBASSY OFFICER VISITING SOUTHEASTERN POLAND (LUBLIN AND ZAMOSC), HOWEVER, DESCRIBED THE SUPPLY SITUATION AND GENERAL ATMOSPHERE THERE AS GRIM. CONSUMER GOODS WERE NOT ON DISPLAY IN STORES, VIRTUALLY NO FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLES COULD BE SEEN, SHELVES OF MEAT STORES WERE EMPTY THROUGH MOST OF THE MORNING, AND LOCAL OFFICIALS WERE ADMITTING THAT A SHORAGE OF MEAT EXISTED.

7. COMMENT: WE INTERPRET THIS SPOTTY PICTURE TO MEAN THAT THE GOVERNMENT, AS IN YEARS PAST, IS DRAWING DOWN ITS STOCKS IN AN ATTEMPT TO SATISFY CONSUMER HOLIDAY DEMANDS. ACCORDING TO OFFICIAL STATISTICS, MARKET DELIVERIES OF MEAT INCREASED BY OVER 20 PERCENT FROM NOVEMBER TO DECEMBER 1975, AND DELIVERIES OF FISH LAST DECEMBER WERE 60 PERCENT HIGHER

THAN IN ANY OTHER MONTH OF THE YEAR. BUT THE AUTHORITIES
ARE DISTRUBUTING THEIR LARGESSE UNEVELY, WITH THE APPARENT
INTENTION OF INSURING THAT THE MOST VOLATILE REGIONS GET
LARGER SHARES OF SUPPLIES. IN THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE, THERE
IS CLEARLY MUCH MORE OF THE MOST DESIRED KINDS OF FOOD
THAN THERE HAS BEEN. WE CONCLUDE THAT THERE WILL BE ENOUGH
GOOD FOOD TO INSURE A MERRY CHRISTMAS FOR MOST POLES
AND A TRANQUIL HOLIDAY SEASON FOR THE GIEREK GOVERNMENT.
BROWN

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